



Town of Darien

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Health Department

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Quarterly Report to the Board of Selectmen

Summer brings several additional responsibilities to our list of normal activities. In addition to inspecting restaurants, salons, septic systems, holding training sessions for food handlers, submitting ticks for testing, issuing recreational shellfishing permits and responding to complaints and inquiries from residents, during the months of May, June, July and August, we also inspect all public pools, seasonal snack bars, the farmers' market and the many special events that serve food to the public on weekends and in the evenings. Other notable programs and initiatives are as follows:

1. Beaches and Water Quality

- Water samples are being collected and tested for bacteria once a week at Pear Tree Point and Weed Beaches. Samples are also being collected at Tokeneke Beach and Holly Pond. So far this summer, there have been no beach closures due to elevated bacteria counts. We monitor rainfall amounts and maintain the beach HOTLINE (203-656-7323) to inform residents whether beaches are open or closed.
- Each time rainfall exceeds one inch, most shoreline communities (Darien included) close beaches preemptively due to concerns over the health risks of elevated bacteria counts that occur after such rainfalls. However, routine testing does not identify sources of bacteria which is critical in assessing the true risk to public health. For three years, we have been attempting to get grant funding to cover costs associated with expanded, innovative testing to perform "source tracking" by identifying bacteria DNA. This office has just been notified that a grant contract has been awarded for the proposed cooperative venture with the Westport/Weston and East Shore Health Districts to perform this source tracking research in three different tributaries of Long Island Sound (Goodwives River in Darien). Water samples will be collected once a month for one year, beginning later in July, 2015. A final determination & report of outcomes will be available within 18 months. This is the first study using DNA testing to evaluate bacteria sources in Long Island Sound. Funding is being provided by CT DEEP.

2. DPH Block Grant Availability

- For the first time, the State Department of Public Health is making block grant funding available to departments that wish to pursue national accreditation offered by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). We have been notified that Darien has been approved for a three year grant which will help move us considerably down the path to becoming accredited. The CT Commissioner of Public Health has established a goal of having 50% of the local health departments accredited by 2020. We will begin the process this year by performing a "health needs assessment" for Darien residents. The Advisory Board of Health has endorsed going forward with this process since the last assessment was completed in 2007.

3. Regulation Change Update

- Notices have been sent to all food service establishments and salons informing them of the newly adopted “reinspection fee” which will now be assessed for any facility that fails two or more inspections within one year.

4. Well Water Survey Results for Pesticides

- Due to the discovery of chlordane and dieldrin in private wells in Stamford, and also arsenic and uranium in wells scattered throughout Connecticut, the CT DPH offered laboratory services to communities in the State to perform a limited survey of private wells. We agreed to participate and collected samples from nineteen private wells in the northern part of town. I am pleased to report that no test results exceeded safe drinking water standards.

5. Health Fair, October 2015

- Planning has begun for the third annual Darien Health Fair. Hoping to attract more town residents and participants this year, the fair will be held later in the fall, on Wednesday, October 21st from 2:30 to 6:30 PM at the Mather Community Center in conjunction with a flu clinic. Other promotional activities are being considered.

6. HeartSafe Community Designation Renewal

- The application for the 3rd renewal for HeartSafe community designation was recently completed by our Public Health nurse Molly Larson and submitted to the State Health Department. The HeartSafe Community designation is effective for a 3-year period and represents recognition of a community’s commitment to provide high levels of emergency cardiac response and interventions. We continue to see an increase in numbers of Darien residents trained in CPR and in the availability of AEDs, both of which save lives.

7. Emergency Preparedness

- Recent interruption in water service at Ox Ridge and Middlesex Schools prompted discussions of emergency preparedness and notification responsibilities related to interruption in utility services. Aquarion, the local water company, has since agreed to modify its notification protocol and the BOE EOP has been revised to improve communication with appropriate town agencies.
- The State DPH has revised Public Health Emergency Preparedness grant funding and moved to a “per capita” funding rate of \$0.76/person, which represents a funding reduction of 53% for Darien. Responsibilities and deliverables under the grant have not yet been defined by DPH.

8. “Keeping Up With Elaine” fitness initiative and new Twitter account

- Public health advisories, topics related to public health and Elaine’s lunchtime walk regimen are features of our new twitter account <https://twitter.com/darienhealth>
- Breaking news and general information are maintained and regularly updated on our website www.darienhealth.com

Respectfully submitted by: David Knauf, Director of Health
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